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Haig Sees Outside Role in El Salvador

Tells House Panel Rebels Are Directed by 'External Command and Control'

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WASHINGTON—Declaring that the outcome of conflicts in Central America is "of vital interest to the American people," Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. told Congress on Tuesday that the guerrillas in El Salvador are directed from "command-and-control" centers outside the country.

Haig said this control is by foreigners and that "evidence is overwhelming and uncontrovertible" to prove it. But he refused to describe the evidence further, saying that to do so in public would jeopardize intelligence sources.

While again insisting that the Reagan Administration has no plans to introduce U.S. combat troops in El Salvador, Haig seemed intent on driving home to the House Foreign Affairs Committee his conviction that the insurgency there is not merely a home-grown revolution, but a Moscow-inspired subversion that endangers "vital interests" of the United States in the Caribbean and Central America.

"The operations of the guerrilla forces inside El Salvador are controlled from external command and control," Haig said.

CIA Director's View

While Haig and others have accused Cuba and the Soviet Union of arming and supporting the Salvadoran guerrillas, Haig has not previously asserted that the guerrillas' military activities are directly controlled by outsiders.

CIA Director William J. Casey, however, recently charged that "this whole El Salvador insurgency is run out of Managua by professionals experienced in directing civil wars." He described the Nicaraguan capital as an "international center" and said in an interview with U.S. News and World Report that "Cubans, Soviets, Bulgarians, East Germans, North Koreans, North Vietnamese and representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization" are operating there.

evidence of Nicaragua's role as a command center for the Salvadoran guerrillas has become sharper as a result of a stepped-up U.S. intelligence effort in recent months. A key element in that effort has been deployment of a Spruance-class destroyer fitted with electronic surveillance equipment off the west coast of Nicaragua.

Haig was less specific than Casey, but equally emphatic in insisting that "irrefutable" evidence has been placed in the hands of the House and Senate intelligence committees.

House Demands Talks

Hours after Haig's testimony, the House voted 396 to 3 in favor of a non-binding resolution calling for "unconditional discussions" among El Salvador's major political factions to assure "a safe and stable environment" for elections, to be held March 28 for a national constituent assembly.

The Reagan Administration did not oppose the resolution, and a State Department spokesman said it was considered parallel to Administration policy. Haig has told the Foreign Affairs Committee that "termination of violence is a precondition for the electoral process."

"We must not be misled by the myth that the (José Napoleon) Duarte government has refused to negotiate an end to the trouble in El Salvador with the guerrillas," Haig declared Tuesday, without expressing opposition to the resolution. "President Duarte has offered to negotiate on the electoral process so that elections can proceed peacefully and the people of El Salvador can choose their own leaders without fear."

So far as negotiations on a broad peace settlement in El Salvador are concerned, the Reagan Administration has generally taken the position that guerrilla attacks must cease before such talks can begin.